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## **Gov. Shumlin, VT Community Preschool Collaborative announce Pre-K funding program**

ESSEX TOWN – Stressing the need for more quality preschool to improve children’s education and outcomes, Gov. Peter Shumlin today announced a public-private partnership to enable communities across the state to launch or expand publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs that give children a strong start on education and eventually lead to improved school performance.

“There is no question that quality pre-K programs give kids the best start possible, ensuring they arrive at school ready to learn,” the Governor said. “In the short term, that means a strong academic future, and better job opportunities down the road.”

The Governor said the state is providing \$400,000 from the Agency of Education to towns that want to create or expand their publically funded pre-K programs. An additional \$400,000 is being provided by the Vermont Community Preschool Collaborative (VCPC), a fund created and supported by the nonprofit Permanent Fund for Vermont’s Children, to ensure more children have access to high quality programs.

The Permanent Fund for Vermont’s Children brings together advocates, donors, business groups, government organizations and others committed to providing early education to give kids a solid start on life.

“Our vision is to make quality pre-K programming accessible to all Vermont 3- and 4-year-olds, and we are thrilled to have the State as a partner in this vision,” said Rick Davis, president and co-founder of The Permanent Fund for Vermont’s Children. “We, along with our funding partners, have chosen to support the Vermont Community Preschool Collaborative because we know that dollars invested in our youngest during their critical growing years will bring the greatest return to society over the long term. We can choose to invest in our children now — or we can pay much more later.”

Under the state-VCPC partnership announced today, grants will provide start-up funding and technical assistance to help school districts form partnerships with high quality childcare providers, and establish quality pre-K programs in their communities. The money can be used for tuition, staffing and staff development, and more. To date, the towns that have qualified to receive VCPC grants are Essex Town, Barre City, Barre Town, Bennington, Danville, Hartford, Hinesburg, Lyndonville, Milton, Pownal, Pittsford, and Woodford.

Since its inception in 2005, VCPC has helped provide more than 2,000 young children in Vermont access to quality publicly funded prekindergarten education. To date, VCPC has been active in 72 Vermont communities.

“For many years now, Vermont Community Preschool Collaborative (VCPC) has nurtured the growth of prekindergarten education across the state. We are honored to join them in this effort,” said Armando Vilaseca, Secretary of Education. “Partnering with VCPC is going to create incredible opportunities for communities to start, and expand, high quality pre-K programs. We want to see all kids in Vermont have access to high quality pre-K as we know that kids who attend high quality pre-K programs have greater success in school and in life.”

Expanding pre-kindergarten opportunities for children was a highlight in the Governor’s Inaugural Address in January, saying, “It is long past time for us to put our money where our mouths have been, and strengthen our commitment to universal early childhood education.”

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